



Arts, Culture & Heritage Commission Staff Report

Date: June 21, 2023

From: Erika Valentine, Arts & Culture Program Coordinator

Subject: Public Art Acquisition/ Donation - Michihiro Kosuge

Recommended Action:

Receive the information about Michihiro Kosuge and his sculpture(s) and provide input.

Background:

Michihiro Kosuge, often called “Michi”, is a well-known local sculptor who had a career spanning 50 years. Additionally, he taught as an art professor at Portland State University for 25 years. He was born and raised in Japan, travelled to California for an MFA program in his early 20’s, and afterward decided to reside in Oregon permanently. Along with his long-time partner Laura Russo (former owner of the Laura Russo Gallery in Portland, which since her death is now the Russo Lee Gallery) the couple formed an important part of the core of Portland-based artists of their generation. Michi is remembered for his works in granite both small and large, and for his influence on his many students.

Michi passed away in 2021, leaving behind his rural studio in Scappoose and a large collection of finished works that adorn the property. His step-son, Dylan Russo Lawrence, was close to Michi and inherited the property. Due to the costs of maintaining it, he has recently decided to sell the property. Wanting Michi’s sculptures to be publically accessible, he has generously offered to donate the sculptures to local cities. The sculptures are free, and the cost involved include transporting and re-installing them on city property, as well as any signage or plaques.

Michi’s sculptures are made of granite and very suited for outdoor public art. There is a size, weight, and presence to stone that is ideal for “place-making”, which is a quality often sought out in public art, which is relevant to the goals outlined in the Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy. As a Japanese-American artist, the roots of Michi’s work are embodied with elements that are cross-cultural, and reinforce Wilsonville’s commitment to international exchange, with specific ties to Japan with Wilsonville’s Sister-City Program. At the same time, Michi’s long life and career in the Pacific Northwest means that adding his works to our collection also builds new local connections with regional art history and with the greater artist community.

Below are the two pieces that are available to the City of Wilsonville. City Staff felt that these two pieces are unique to the City’s existing collection as well as are an appropriate size for transportation, which also give some flexibility on future placement and location. Due to the size and shorter height of them, reinstallation will be fairly simple and minimal.



Future Steps:

City Staff will be meeting with the appropriate staff regarding logistics of transportation and storing, as well as the legal department regarding initiating a contract showing the donation to the City. City staff would then return to a future ACHC meeting to discuss options of appropriate locations for placement of the sculptures, which the ACHC would provide input on.